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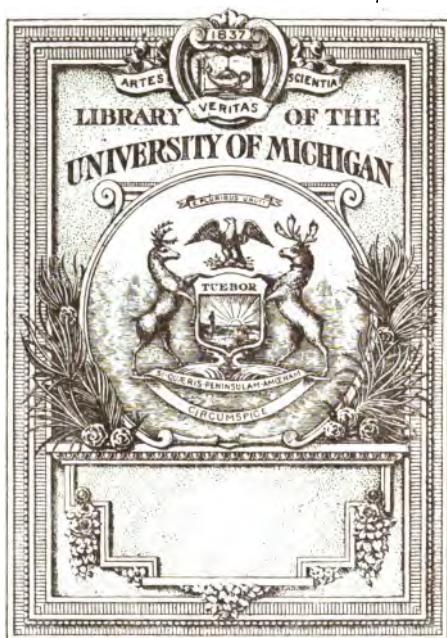
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THE GIFT OF  
*Frank K. Walters*

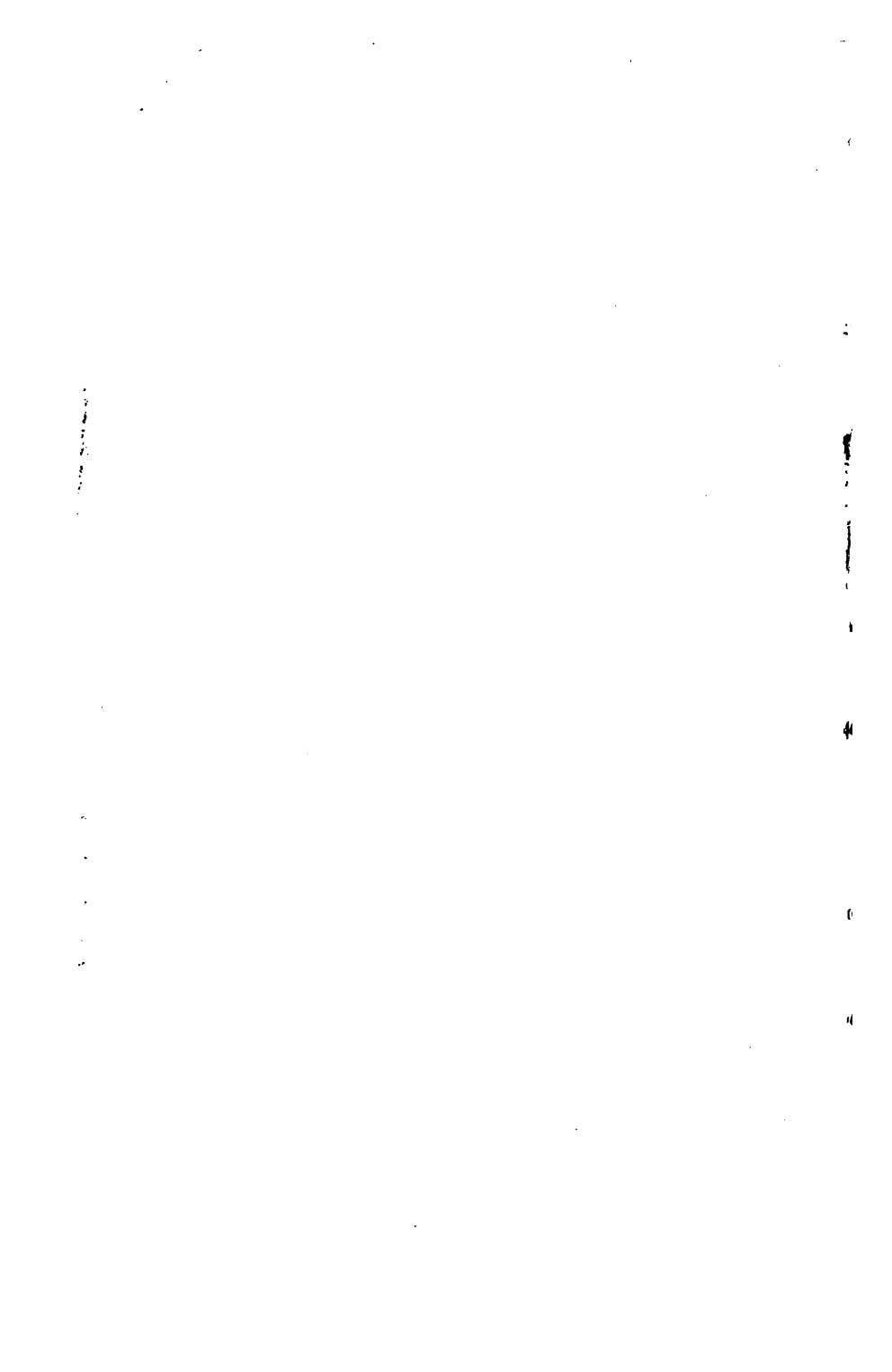
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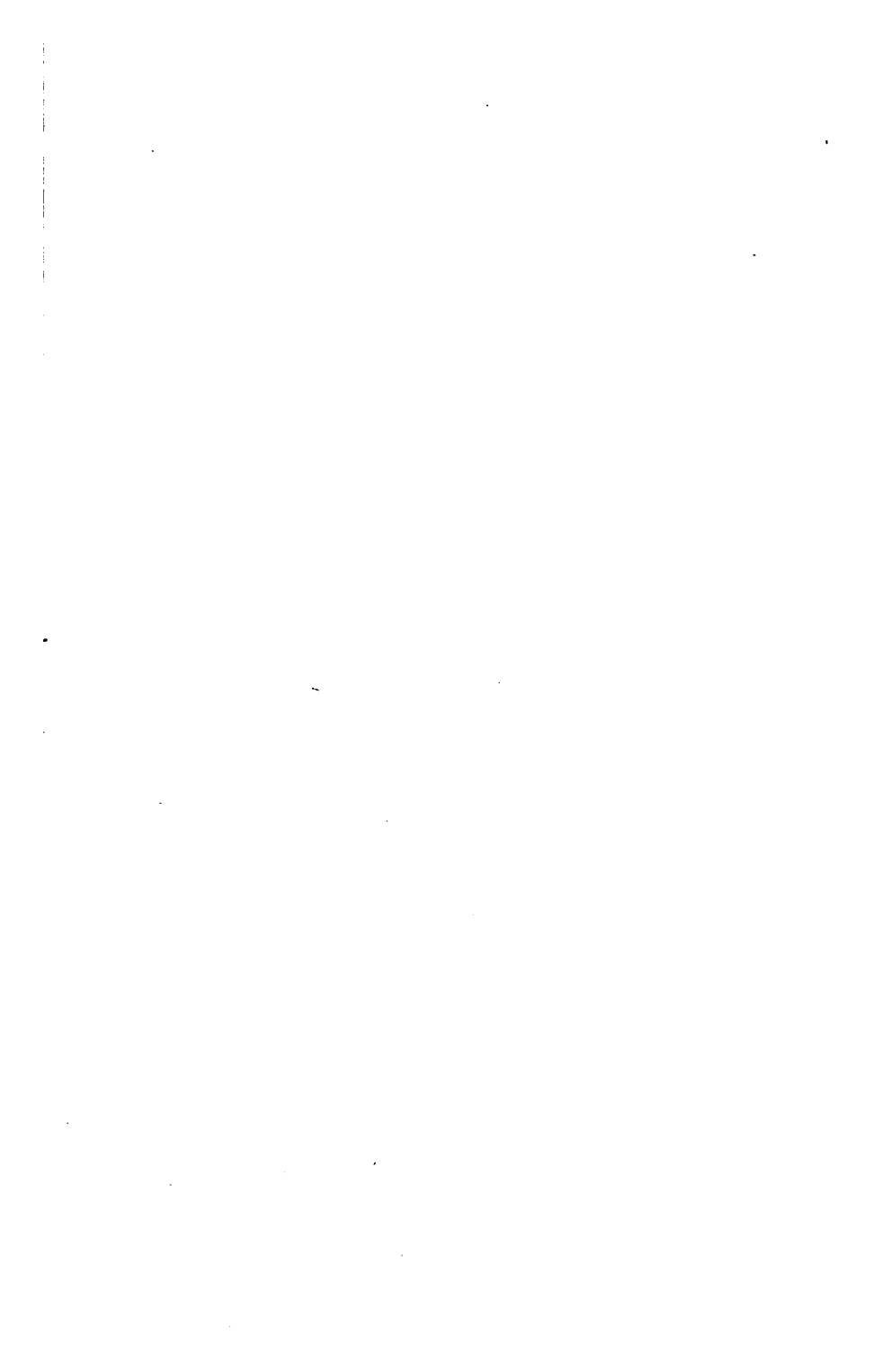


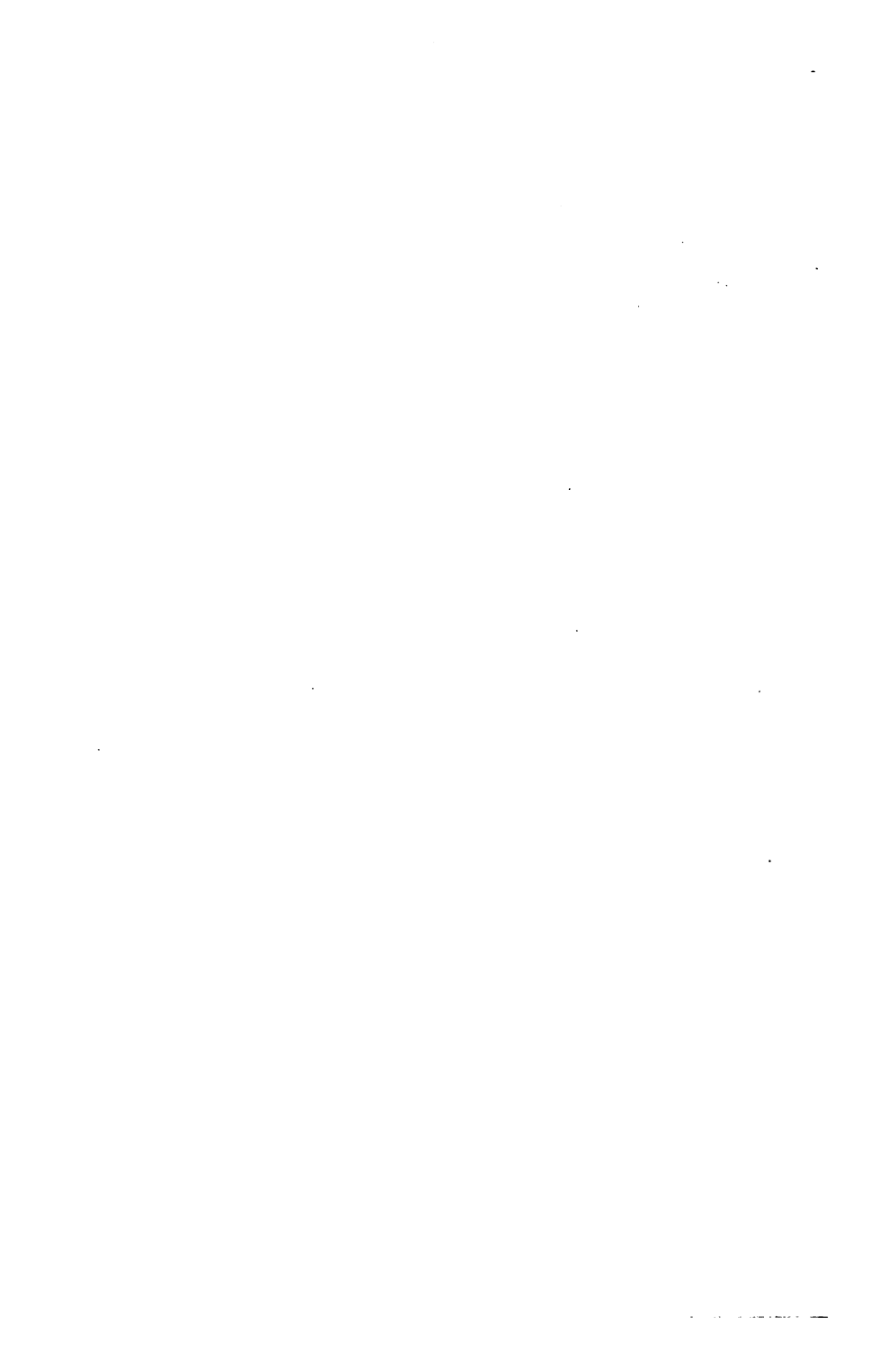


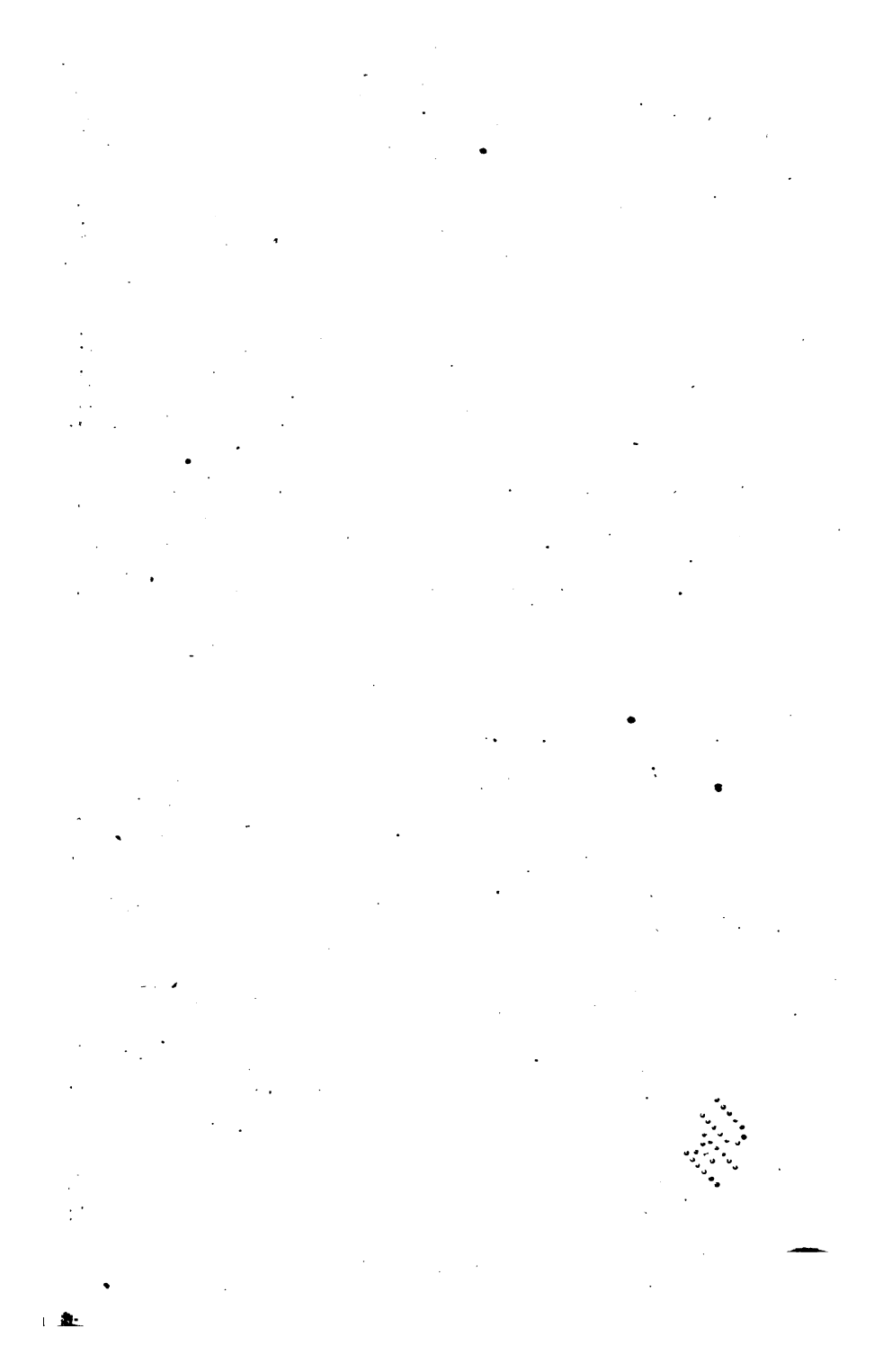


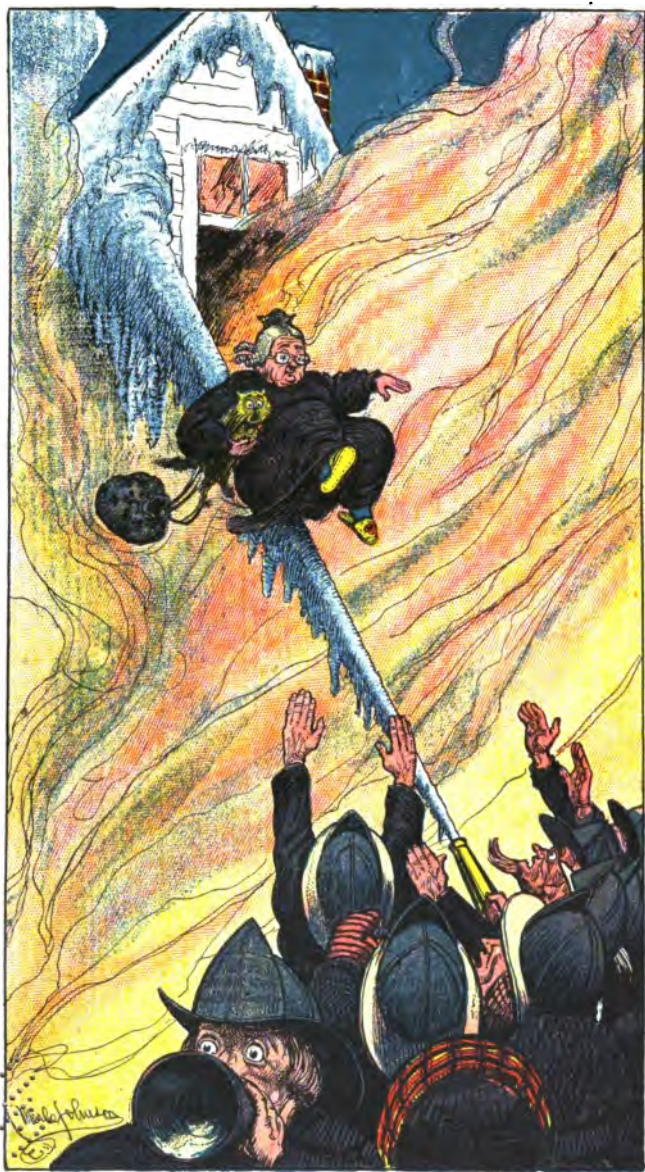












Slid down the frozen stream to friends and safety below.

THE YARN OF THE INVENTIVE VAMP.

# A Ball of Yarn



ITS UNWINDING

*By*

ROBERT RUDD WHITING

*The Illustrations by*  
MERLE JOHNSON



PAUL ELDER & COMPANY  
SAN FRANCISCO AND NEW YORK

Many of these yarns were first printed in the *New York Sun*, and the author wishes to acknowledge the courtesy of the editor of that paper in permitting their publication here in book form.

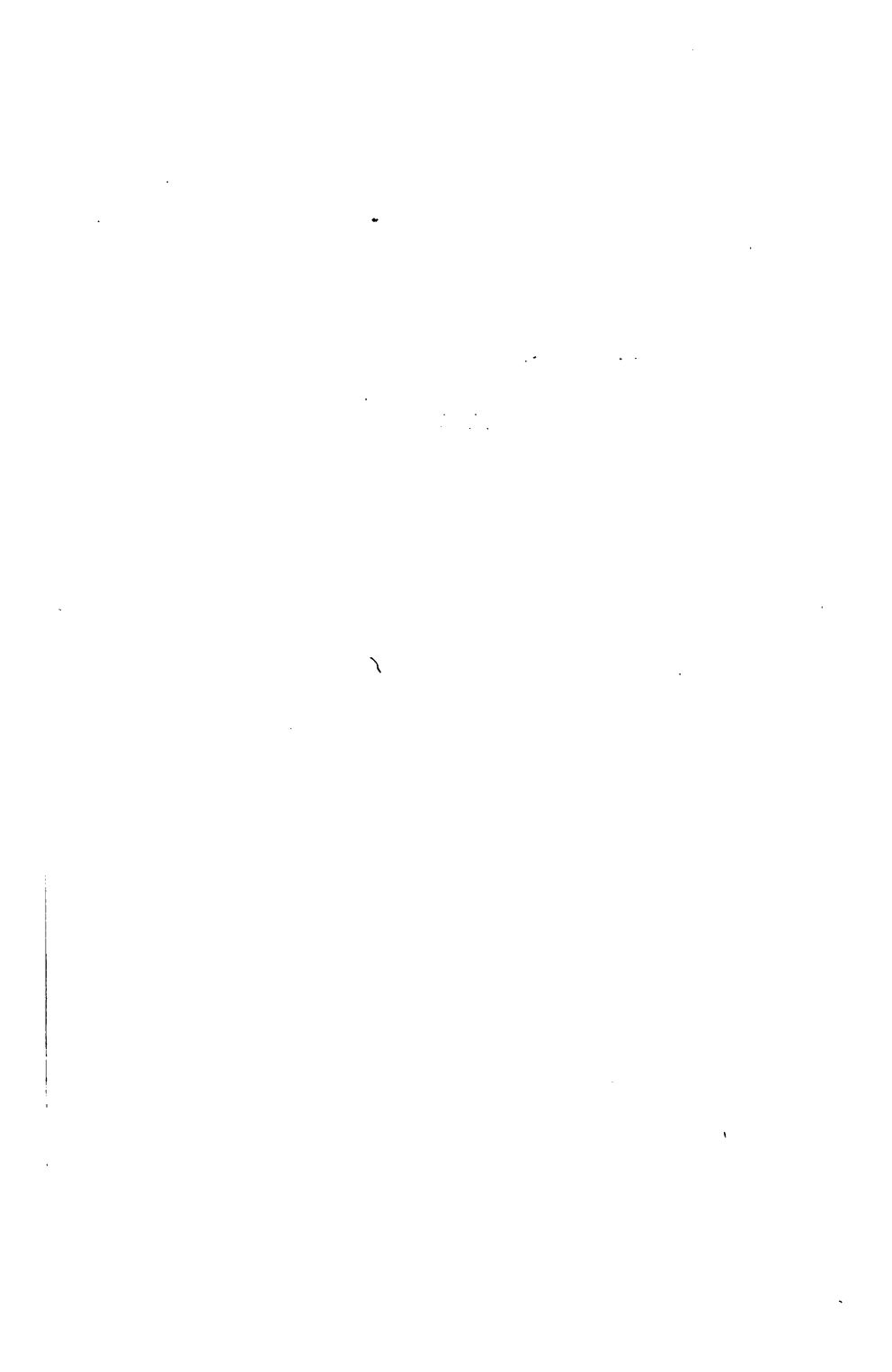
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by PAUL ELDER AND COMPANY

The Tomoye Press

21-16-2254,  
**THIS LITTLE BOOK  
IS ADMIRINGLY DEDICATED  
TO  
ANANIAS, SAPPHIRA, BARON MUNCHAUSEN  
AND SOME OTHERS  
I KNOW**

**335989**



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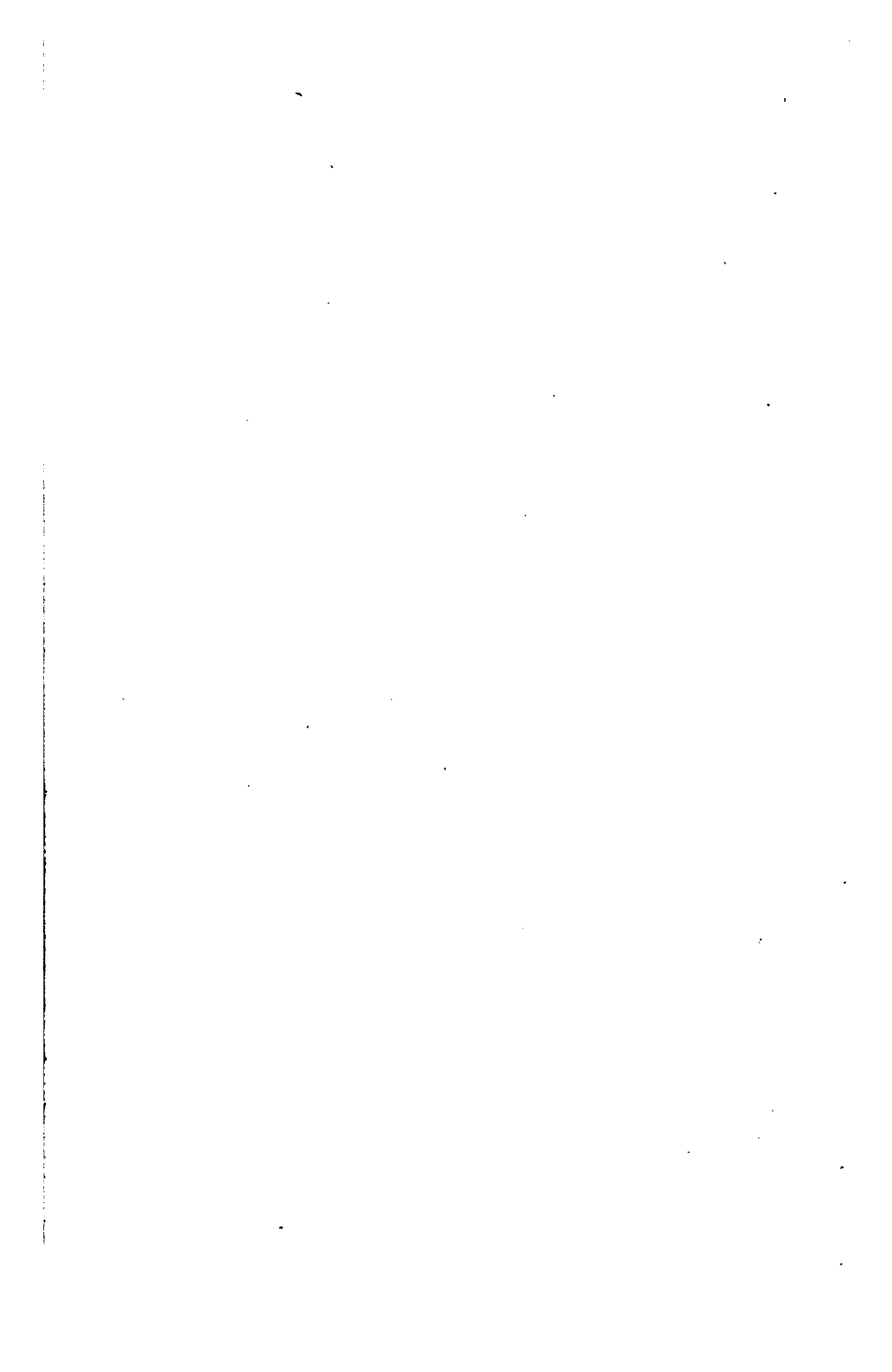
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## *The First Skein*

*June bugs darted through the open windows of the Mansion House and butted drunkenly against the tin reflectors of the kerosene-lamps along the office walls. The monotonous buzzing from the fly-paper on the desk was from time to time reinforced by the frantic protests of some new victim.*

*Four pairs of legs radiated from the cold stove in the center of the room: the massive, imposing legs that supported the three hundred and sixty-odd pounds of William Little, landlord of the Mansion House; the long, literary legs that terminated in Ezra Norton, editor of The Oxendale Townsman; the sophisticated, urban legs, enwrapped in startling checks and capped with patent leather, which hustled,*

*when called upon, for Lochinvar Leary, the cigar drummer; and, finally, the legs inside the earth-encrusted boots that had the honor of upholding Ebenezer Abbott, Oxendale's sage and raconteur.*

*Mr. Little laid down the paper with which he had been fanning himself, and mopped his ample brow.*

*"It's hot," he announced feelingly.*

*"It is hot," admitted Ebenezer Abbott, "but it might be worse."*

*"Might be worse!" gasped Mr. Leary. "Why, if 'twas any hotter than this, them flies over there would drown in their own perspiration."*

*"I say it might be worse," repeated Mr. Abbott calmly. "It might be cold. An' fur downright peskiness, hot weather ain't in th' same thermometer with a right smart cold snap. Why, I remember oncet it wus so everlastin' cold right here in Oxendale thet there warn't man, woman nor child in th' whole durned town thet wus able t' find where he lived fur more'n six hours. An' 'twould 've been longer'n thet if Fedge Poor's house hadn't been destroyed through a*

*fortunate piece of carelessness on his part.  
What did th' cold weather have t' do with it?  
I'll tell ye."*

*And the Sage of Oxendale thereupon unfolded—*

## The Yarn of the Breath- Bound Village



WUS about nine o'clock in th' mornin' when I started down toward th' post-office, an' say, mebbe it warn't cold! Why, ye could see yer breath so durn plain thet—wal, I'll tell ye jest how durn plain ye could see yer breath.

About half way down th' hill I seed Si Draper comin' outer his gate. He wus puffin' out big clouds of cold breath, too.

"Mornin' Si," says I.

"Mornin' yerself," says Si. "Hold yer breath a minute so's I ken see who ye be. Oh, it's you, Eb, is it? I thought so from th' sound of yer voice. Phew! but it's cold!"

Say, thet there "phew!" of Si's gave rise to a cold-breath cloud thet fur ten minutes completely surrounded us.

Jest as it wus clearin' away we saw another cloud comin' right fur us, an' a-fore we had time t' dodge, we bumped plum inter old Jedge Poor an' sent him sprawlin'.

I knew it were th' jedge from th' words he gave utterance to at th' time of th' bump.

Wal, sir, Jedge Poor wus so winded from his fall, an' spluttered an' panted so, thet a-fore we'd finished explainin' to him how it all happened, we wus all three a-shiverin' in th' midst of an impenetrable cold-breath fog.

It wus so thick thet y' couldn't see yer hand in front of yer face, even when ye held it there.

We groped around quite a spell a-fore we finally found each other. Then we grabbed hold of hands an' decided t' stick t'gether till things cleared up some.

"Now then, all t'gether," commanded Si. "Hold yer breaths!"

We all held.

But jest as th' air began t' thin out a mite, th' jedge, whose face had been gettin' redder 'n redder, couldn't hold in no longer, an' exploded with a breath thet clouded us in denser 'n ever.

We tried it again an' again, but 'twarn't no use. Th' jedge always exploded jest at th' critical moment when we were beginnin' t' see our way out, an' every time he did, th' fog closed in thicker 'n before.

So we quit thet plan an' decided t' try an' get somewheres. We grabbed hold of coat-tails an' started in t' feel our way as best we could.

But arter we'd been crawlin' along fur about fifteen minutes we found we'd been doin' nothin' but goin' round in circles an' hadn't got nowheres. What's more, we wuz all pantin' so hard from th' exertion an' excitement thet our breath-clouds thickened th' fog almost t' suffocation.

Say, you've never been lost in yer own breath, right in yer native town, shiverin' almost t' death, but feared t' move fur

fear of gettin' more lost, have ye? Wal, then, ye can't comprehend th' awful despair an' helplessness of it. Words can't express it.

Fur a few minutes we jest stood there a-tremblin', too durn terrorfied t' do anything.

Then, as if by one impulse, we all threw back our heads an' shouted at th' top of our lungs:

"Help! Help! Help! Help!"

Gosh all hemlock! how we must 've hollered! Leastwise every man, woman an' child in Oxendale, 1,876 souls includin' Ovid Phelps who ain't got any soul accordin' t' th' parson, came rushin' outer their houses t' see what wuz th' trouble with who.

As fast as they'd come, why, of course, they'd get lost in their breaths, too. 'Twarn't long a-fore th' whole population wuz runnin' 'round like chickens with their heads off, bumpin' inter each other, an' a-swearin' out more fog at every bump. 'Twus awful.

Goodness only knows what would 've

happened if it hadn't been fur thet carelessness on th' part of Jedge Poor.

Ye see when he kem out he left th' candle burnin' on th' cupboard right next t' th' matches. When th' candle burned down, th' matches started up, an' pretty soon th' whole durn house wus a-fire from top t' bottom.

It hadn't been burnin' more'n an hour a-fore th' air begun t' thaw, an' by th' time th' roof fell in, th' fog had melted away so 's we could all see where we lived.

The whole town immediatly stopped their cussin' an' broke out in one mighty cheer.

Course 'twus kinder hard on th' jedge, losin' his house thet way, but we all chipped in an' built him a better one.

Not thet th' fire weren't all his own fault, mind ye, but—wal, if *his* house hadn't burned down we'd a-probably spent all th' rest of thet winter gropin' around in a cold-breath fog tryin' t' find *our* houses.

*"Why, that must have been the winter that the druggist's cows all gave cold cream," suggested the landlord with an ill-concealed wink at the cigar drummer.*

*Mr. Abbott glared at him fiercely.*

*"All joking aside, though," mused Ezra Norton, "it certainly was an unusually cold winter."*

*"What do you know about it?" snapped Mr. Abbott, jealous of sharing his own particular winter with anybody else. "That winter, young man, took place a-fore you were born."*

*"I've often heard my grandfather speak of it," continued the editor, unperturbed. "And while your account of what transpired while the breath-fog was at its densest is substantially correct, you have omitted the interesting detail of how Judge Poor's widowed mother was snatched from the jaws of death at the eleventh hour."*

*"Umph!" sneered the sage. "I'd like t' know what in tarnation yer grandfather knew about it."*

*"Grandfather," replied the editor with great dignity, "was Captain of the Oxendale*

*Volunteer Hose Company, sworn fire-fighters,  
and I have this from his own lips."*

*Whereupon Mr. Norton unwound—*

## The Yarn of the Inventive Vamp



HE instant the fog had cleared away sufficiently for Grandfather to see that the judge's house was ablaze, he rallied his brave fire laddies about him. In spite of the fact that they had over half a mile further to go, they reached the scene of the conflagration almost simultaneously with the hook-and-ladder company.

By that time the unusual hubbub about the place had aroused the judge's aged mother from her afternoon nap on the top floor. She rushed to the nearest window and screamed piercingly for help.

"Don't jump!" the men of the hook-and-ladder company warned her. "We'll have a ladder up in less 'n no time."

But try as they would they could not

budge the ladder from the truck; it had frozen fast. A groan of horror swept through the crowd. The old lady wrung her hands piteously.

'Twas then that Grandfather stepped into the breach.

"Rest easy, madam," he called in stentorian tones. "I will find a way."

He had observed that the water froze just as fast as it left the nozzle. It was to this observation of Grandfather's that the aged lady owed her life. He played the hose against the top-story window and she slid down the frozen stream to friends and safety below.

*As the editor finished, Ebenezer Abbott gave a snort of disgust. Then, apropos of nothing apparently, he observed: "George Washin'ton must 've been chock full o' lies. Leastwise, accordin' to all reports, he never managed t' work any off."*

*"Well, of course cold weather's got its disadvantages," put in Mr. Leary, for the sake of peace, "but I don't think it's as bad as weather like this under any circumstances."*

*There ain't so many bad smells around when it's cold."*

*"Heat undoubtedly does intensify odors," agreed the landlord. "I've often noticed it, especially in the case of Blinksey Black, the famous outfielder of the old Lightfoot Lilies who held the baseball championship of Jones County for so many years. Early in the spring when the afternoons were still crisp he used to have considerable trouble in judging difficult fly balls, but when the season advanced and the weather got real good and blistery, he was better than most ball-players who had the use of their eyesight."*

*"Huh?" questioned the bewildered cigar drummer. "You say he was better than most players that had the use of their eyesight? Well, how in the name of a Russian general could he play ball at all if he couldn't see? It may be that I'm suffering from the heat, but somehow or other I don't seem to be in quite right on your conversation."*

*"Why, Blinksey Black, the blind ball-player of the Lightfoot Lilies — you've surely heard of him if you follow sporting matters at all?"*

*As Mr. Leary was not quite sure, there was nothing left for Landlord Little but to relate—*

## The Yarn of the Blind Ball-Tosser



BLACK had been with the Lilies two or three seasons when one day some jealous woman who'd mistaken him for another man suddenly gave him the carbolic sling and he lost the use of both eyes. Now, you'd naturally think that that would have meant his finish as a ball-player, but it didn't.

Have you ever noticed how when a man loses the use of a leg, or something, the strength that was in that leg always goes to some other part of his body? Why, take some of these skinny little armless guys you see; they have under-pinnings on 'em that Samson needn't have been ashamed of before he had his hair cut.

Well, that's the way it was with Black.

When he lost his eyesight it went to his nose. He developed a sense of smell that would have brought tears of envy to the eyes of the finest bloodhound that ever sniffed a scent.

We discovered this at practise one day. Black was standing close by listening to the batting when a wild pitch made straight for him.

"Look out!" we yelled.

But Black, to our amazement, instead of dodging, threw up his hands and gobbled in the ball as easy as you please.

"I thought I smelled 'er coming," he explained. "Violets, isn't it?" he added with a sniff.

We couldn't figure out what he meant until Bull Thompson, the catcher, shame-faced and blushing, admitted that he had washed his hands with scented soap that morning. A slight perfume had clung to the ball, and Black had smelled out its course.

"By the great Dan Brouthers!" exclaimed Slugger Burrows, the Lilies' captain. "There's no reason why you should

give up baseball, Blinksey. Report for practise in your old place in left-field tomorrow."

Black did report; and, say, would you believe it, he was as good a fielder as ever he'd been before his accident. A single drop of heliotrope placed on the ball in the first inning was enough to make him follow it around like a hound all the rest of the game.

At the bat he was even better than he'd been before. His keen sense of smell enabled him to tell which way the ball was twisting the moment it left the pitcher's hand, and he always knew exactly what curve to expect.

The one thing that troubled us about Blinksey for a time was his base-running. We first tried spraying heliotrope along the base line. That would work all right for a few innings, but after the ball had been batted around the diamond a bit, he was likely to run afoul of grounder trails. When he did he was just as apt as not to leave his course suddenly and dart out to center-field on some false scent.



WILLIAM LITTLE, Landlord of the Mansion House.

44

It was Bull Thompson who finally solved the problem. While we still stuck to heliotrope for the ball perfume, we substituted a powerful essence of white rose as a base-line spray. This worked to perfection, and save for a few days when he had a slight cold in his head, there wasn't a better base-runner on the team than Blinksey Black.

But, like most great men, Black had his downfall. And, as luck would have it, it came just when it would be most felt.

'Twas in the last inning of the great contest with the Ringtail Roarers for the championship of Jones County. The Lilies were leading, 12-10, and although the Roarers had the bases filled, two were out.

On the third ball pitched, the batter drove a long, low fly to left. We started to reach for our hats. Blinksey's nose had never failed us yet.

But this time the unexpected happened. Just as Black was stretching forth his hands to receive the ball, some well-

meaning but misguided admirer threw a bouquet at him.

An agonized expression of indecision came over Blinksey's face. He hesitated. The pungent perfume of the freshly picked flowers was too much for him. He dived wildly at the flying bouquet, the men on bases cantered home, and the game was lost.

But that wasn't all. The ball struck Black on the nose and broke it. His stock in trade as a baseball-player was ruined for ever afterward.

If then he'd only had the acute sense of hearing that he developed as soon as his nose was broken, he'd undoubtedly have detected the difference in sound between the ball and the bouquet and might be playing the game today.

*Tender memories that he had awakened within himself forced a heavy sigh from deep down in the landlord's bosom.*

*"Truth is certainly stranger than fiction," commented the editor.*

*"Mebbe so," muttered Ebenezer Abbott,*

*reaching for his hat and coat. "Mebbe so.  
There's no denyin' thet thet wus strange,  
though,—no matter how ye choose t' take it."*



## *The Second Skein*

*"It's a little cooler than last night, Mr. Abbott."*

*This was the cigar drummer's third attempt to draw the Sage of Oxendale into conversation.*

*"What's the matter with you, Eb?" demanded the portly landlord. "You ain't yourself tonight. There must be something on your mind."*

*"There is," admitted Mr. Abbott, reluctantly. "My conscience has been a-troublin' me all evenin'. D'ye remember that double-tailed pointer dog that I exhibited at th' county fair several years ago?"*

*The landlord and the editor nodded non-committingly.*

*"Wal, th' whole thing wus an out-'n-out fake. Thet pointer warn't a two-tailed dog at all."*

*A murmur of polite surprise greeted this confession.*

*"It's kinder been weighin' on my conscience ever since," he continued, "an' now I'm goin' t' tell th' truth about it an' get it off my mind fur good an' all."*

*Whereupon he unburdened himself of—*

## The Yarn of the Two-tailed Pointer



**W**HAT thet two-tailed dog of mine really wus was a one-tailed dog with his tail split in two halves. I bred him myself an' I oughter know.

His father and mother were th' two finest durn critters that ever pointed a bird, so 'twus only natural thet he should 've been a hunter right from th' start.

Th' thing thet tempted me t' stoop t' deceivin' the county fair happened th'

very first time I took him gunnin'. Th' second he laid eyes on a bird his tail stiffened out like a ramrod.

But he seemed to be in awful agony over somethin'. His tail swelled up an' begun t' quiver an' tremble like it was almost fit to bust with agitation.

Suddenly th' tip seemed to open up a little, an' then,—swish! His tail had split clean down th' whole length.

I couldn't figure it out ontill I noticed thet th' tarnation pup was cross-eyed. Y' see he'd been tryin' t' point th' bird th' way it looked t' him.

*"Hope your conscience feels better," said Mr. Leary, rather dubtfully.*

*"Speaking of the county fair reminds me," Editor Ezra Norton hastily interposed, "the circus is coming to town next month. I had a letter from the advance agent this morning. And, by the way, he ought to be here himself sometime tonight to see about bill-posters, show-cards and other literature. He asked me to engage a room here for him."*

*"What did he write to you for?"*

*demanded Landlord Little, indignantly. "Who does he think 's running this hotel, anyway? That's what I'd like to know."*

*"Why—er—you see, he had to write to me about advertising space in The Townsman, and I suppose——"*

*"Don't see what he wants to advertise in The Townsman for. Nobody ever reads it. And even if they did——"*

*"Here comes a hack from the 8:15," interrupted the cigar drummer, who had detected a rumbling of wheels. "Maybe this is him now."*

*The hack drew up outside. Murphy, the driver, stuck his head in the door and slid a suit-case across the floor. A few seconds later the owner of it entered.*

*He was a little man whose artfulness in dress and toilet gave an impression of prosperity that was not borne out by closer scrutiny. The wondrous curl of his mustaches distracted attention from a two days' growth of beard on his chin; the dazzling stone in his shirt-front blinded the eye to the grease-spots on his waistcoat, his gilded watch-chain delayed one's discovery of the fact that his coat was shiny*

*at the elbows, while the pearl-colored gaiters that overshadowed the shabbiness of his shoes were equally effective in diverting observation from the frayed spots on the bottoms of his trousers.*

*The arrival glanced inquiringly at the group around the stove.*

*"Can I get a room here? I'm Mr. Sinclair—Mr. D'Arcy Sinclair of Ring Brothers' Stupendous Circus and Educational Side Show, one ring, children half-price, greatest——"*

*"We were expecting you, Mr. Sinclair," said Landlord Little, rising ponderously, and taking the newcomer's suit-case. "If you'll follow me upstairs I'll show you your room. You were lucky to strike us right in our dull season."*

*The satellites of the stove smoked in silence until the return of the landlord. They waited expectantly while he lowered himself into his chair.*

*"Wal?" suggested Mr. Abbott.*

*"He'll be down in a minute," Mr. Little announced. "He'll be here tomorrow night, too."*

“Excuse me, Mr. Landlord,” said Mr. D’Arcy Sinclair, making his reappearance a few minutes later, “but can you tell me whether I’d be apt to find the editor of *The Townsman* in his office this time o’ night?”

“Why, here he is right here,” said Mr. Little, indicating the editor with a wave of his hand. “From the way he spoke I thought he knew you. Mr. Norton, shake hands with Mr. Sinclair. Draw up a chair, sir.”

They edged around to make room for another pair of feet on the stove.

“I’ll only keep you a minute, Mr. Norton,” the Circus man assured him. “Have you pencil and paper about you? Good. I am going to put you in possession of material for a news article of tremendous importance, which I know you will be glad to make room for on the first page of your esteemed journal. Perhaps, in the interests of the Circus, I should withhold these facts for the present, but conscience is an awful thing, gentlemen, and in this case it clearly shows me that my duty to the public outweighs my duty to my employers.

“While it is true that any announcement in the public prints of the illness of the

*Human Louvre, our tattooed man, will undoubtedly keep thousands away from the side show of Ring Brothers' Stupendous Circus, yet—yet, gentlemen, in view of the remarkable nature of the illness of this abnormally athletic, astoundingly accomplished and absorbingly artistic acquisition, it seems unjust to the best interests of science to withhold——”*

*“Tattooed man sick, eh?” ventured Mr. Abbott. “What’s th’ trouble with him?”*

*By way of reply Mr. Sinclair unfolded the facts of—*

## The Yarn of the Human Louvre



ATTOOED men are hard to handle. I suppose it’s the artisticness of their temperaments—too much imagination. The better they are, the worse their imaginations. And our tattooed man was the best in the business.

You surely must have heard of him if you follow the fine arts at all. The

Human Louvre was his stage alias, and leading connoisseurs have assured me that his pictures were possessed of a certain life and color that is lacking in many of the finest specimens in the equally famous Louvre in Paris.

Aside from the finest galaxy of needle-and-ink sketches that artist ever put on cuticle, the Human Louvre had a chest expansion that required an elastic skin to hold it all.

And he used that same expansion to marvelous effect in exhibiting the two *chef d'œuvres* that adorned his manly chest.

One of these masterpieces was a magnificent specimen of Chinese dragon in red, yellow and blue; the other, a splendid red, blue and green South African lion, rampant *and* roaring.

The two were pictured facing each other, with their heads about four inches apart. By sharply expanding and contracting his chest, the Human Louvre could give the dragon and lion the appearance of springing at each other in a

way that inspired our patrons with mingled anxiety, awe *and* admiration.

Marvelous, you say? Never anything like it. But just as the world's greatest savants, philosophers and literati were about to sit up and take notice, Daisy the Fat Lady cast her shadow across his path.

Now, what under the sun an art amateur like the Human Louvre could see in Daisy the Fat Lady is beyond me. She was of a shallow, superficial nature, incapable of appreciating art in any form, and she had a figure that took fifty-seven seconds to pass a given point.

But fall in love with her he did. She, as might be expected, took a violent fancy to the glass-eater, a shiftless, good-for-nothing sort of fellow.

Well, that started the Human Louvre on his downward course. He took to mooning and sulking until he actually began to worry himself thin.

He grew more peaked and tired-looking every day until finally, at the end of the week, he came to me and said:

"Boss, I'm in a bad way."

"Oh, never mind Daisy," I urged him cheerfully. "You're too good for her, anyway."

"'Tain't Daisy," he mournfully replied. "I'm getting so awful thin, though, that——"

"Forget it," I told him. "What if you are falling off a bit? Look at the living skeleton; he's happy."

"'Tain't the getting thin so much, boss. It's the results. Have you noticed the dragon and the lion on my chest lately? They used to be a good four inches apart, but I've been losing flesh so that there's only two inches between 'em now."

"Now, it may be just my imagination, but somehow it seems to me that that dragon's fang is curled a little tighter and that the lion's mouth is open just a mite wider than it used to be."

"I know they're only pictures and all that, but I can't help worrying a good deal about it just the same. Supposing I should get so awful thin that them beasts would be right on top of one another and get to scrapping? Why, say boss, some-

times when I get to thinking about it in the middle of the night, it just strings cold sweat beads all up and down my backbone."

Now what do you think of that for the working of an artistic imagination? I told him to take cod-liver oil and to drink plenty of ale, and that before he knew it he'd have so much chest that that lion and Chinese dragon would be backing into each other 'round behind his shoulder-blades.

But he kept right on worrying and worrying, and in spite of the cod-liver oil and ale, he worried himself so thin that the week following, when he took his seat on the platform, there was scarcely a quarter of an inch between the dragon's head and the lion's mouth.

All during the lectures that day he seemed to be acting strangely. Every once in a while he'd start suddenly as though terrified at something. Then he'd glance nervously at his chest.

Next day he didn't show up. I went to see him and found him sick in bed.

He was breathing with great difficulty. His landlady said that he'd been complaining of terrible pains in the chest ever since morning.

"The doctor says it's pneumonia," she told me. "He says he ought to be taken to the hospital."

When she had left the room the poor old Human Louvre beckoned to me to come close.

"Say," he said in a hoarse whisper, "don't you think you'd be complaining of sharp pains if you had a rough-house on your chest like this?"

With a sickly smile he unbuttoned his nightshirt and bared his chest.

I gave one look and drew back aghast.

The lion had the dragon's head in its mouth, and—it may have been due to the sick man's labored breathing—but it certainly seemed as if that lion was slowly chewing up that dragon.

Pneumonia? Maybe. But whatever it is they'll have to keep his mind from worrying, and fatten him up enough to pull them beasts apart again. If they

don't, that lion will get that Chinese dragon and the poor old Human Louvre along with it.

What became of Daisy the Fat Lady? Oh, she married the glass-eater. But they hadn't been housekeeping three days before he kicked on her cooking and ate up her ruby necklace, to say nothing of nibbling most of the settings out of her diamond rings. Served her good and right, too.

*"Humph. I don't see as how a yarn like thet's a-goin' t' keep folks from attendin' th' Circus," observed the Sage of Oxendale. "I never did take much stock in them fool tattooed men, anyway. When I want'er look at pictures I want 'em in a book where I can turn 'em over t' suit m'self."*

*"Really?" said Mr. Sinclair more hopefully. "It does me a world of good to hear you say so."*

*"What I want'er see when I go t' th' Circus," continued Mr. Abbott, "is th' Circassian girl, th' fat lady, th'—did y' say thet th' glass-eater wus still with ye?"*

*The Circus man's face clouded again.*

*"Dear, dear," he sighed mournfully. "I'd almost forgotten about that. No, we fired the glass-eater that eloped with the fat lady and engaged another one—but he's sick, too. Splendid artist in every respect, as long as he stuck to a simple plate-glass diet. But on his birthday, his fellow artists went and gave him a sumptuous banquet with a magnificent stained-glass window representing 'The Temptation of St. Anthony' for the pièce de résistance. The food proved too rich for him and not only upset his stomach but developed a sort of dual personality in him as well. Every once in a while the Temptation side of him would get making flirt-eyes at the Circassian girl. Then, without the slightest warning, the St. Anthony side of his nature would get the upper hand and he'd have remorse so bad that he'd have to start in on a two weeks' fast to discipline himself. Now far be it from the Circus management, gentlemen, to interfere with any man's religion, but when a glass-eater refuses to eat, he ain't any longer a glass-eater. So we had to let him go, too."*

*"Is that for publication, too?" inquired Mr. Norton, arranging his notes.*

*Mr. Sinclair thoughtfully scratched his chin.*

*"Why, yes," he finally decided. "I don't see any harm in your printing it as long as you don't use my name. Be sure to keep me out of it, though. Some people would be just mean enough to think that I was using a man's affliction to advertise the show."*

*"Say," said Lochinvar Leary, "I've been thinkin' about that human tattooed man of yours. Now there's a case where I should think all this faith-cure-mental-suggestion business would have the bulge on medicine."*

*"'Twould," declared Mr. Abbott before the Circus man had time to answer.*

*"Ah, then you know of a case, sir, where mental—er—suggestion was successfully employed?" ventured Mr. Sinclair.*

*"Wal, not exactly," admitted Mr. Abbott, "but it's a poor rule thet don't work botl. ways, an' if this here mental business can kill a fine, strong, healthy man in th' prime of life, I don't see why it shouldn't be able t' cure an ailin' man thet's gradu'ly wastin' away. Ezra, d'ye ever remember hearin' tell of Si Marland's death when you wus a boy?"*

*"Seems to me I do," replied the editor.*

*"Dropped dead at his birthday party. Heart disease, wasn't it?"*

*"Nope. Thet's what th' doctōrs said, but they wus wrong. 'T wus old age."*

*"Old age!" exclaimed Mr. Norton. "Why, he was only 45 when he died!"*

*Instead of making a direct reply, Mr. Abbott related—*

## The Yarn of Suggestive Senility



**W**HEN Si Marland wus 47 years old—not 45, Ezra—he gave th' finest durn birthday party thet wus ever held in Oxendale. He had a special barrel of Connecticut greenin's sent up jest fur th' apple toddy, an' all day long while Si an' his company wus emptyin' one crock, there'd be another one brewin' t' take its place.

Now Si Marland's apple toddy warn't like ordinary apple toddy. Josh Long always used t' say thet if it had been Si's apple toddy thet had made Adam fall, he

could 've understood it better. It was potent. Y' might n't notice it so much at first, but then, all of a sudden, while 'twus still tingling 'round in yer finger-tips, 'twould shoot down an' tangle up th' steerin' geer in yer legs a-fore y' knowed it.

Consequence was, when Si an' his friends sat down t' th' birthday feast thet night—wal, they was consid'rably under th' influence.

Things would 've been all right at thet if old Mrs. Marland had n't baked a big birthday cake with 47 lighted candles in it an' set it down in front of Si jest as th' toddy was makin' itself most felt.

Si straightened up an' stared at thet cake. He seemed sorter surprised at something. He rubbed his eyes an' looked again. He began t' turn white, an' then, all at once, he threw both hands t' his chest an' fell over backwards.

Wal, *you* know what th' doctors said. Old Doc Chapman who got there first said 'twus heart desease, an' Doc Phelps arterwards agreed with him.



EBENEZER ABBOTT, Oxendale's Sage and Raconteur.

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But I know better. Josh Long, who was settin' right next t' Si, told me 'twus nothin' of th' sort. He said that th' apple toddy had made Si see double. Consequence wus, when he saw them 47 candles in thet there cake he counted 94 of 'em an' jest dropped off natur'ly from old age. Josh was cock sure about it because he remembers perfectly thet at th' time they looked th' same way t' him.

*For several moments after the conclusion of Mr. Abbott's yarn no one spoke.*

*"Just hearin' about drinks makes me thirsty this kind of weather," observed Mr. Leary with a slight yawn.*

*"Me too," admitted the landlord, with a questioning glance at the cigar drummer. "'Tain't right, Eb, to relate things like that in a temperance town."*

*"Then let's all go up to my room," suggested Mr. Leary, with an inviting wink. "Come on, Mr. Norton; you're not goin' to leave us this early, are you?"*

*"Much obliged," the editor declined, "but we go to press tomorrow, and I want to see*

*the staff about some changes on the front page."*

*This was the most transparent sort of an excuse, for everybody knew that by that time the staff was home with its widowed mother, four miles out in the country.*



## *The Third Skein*

*"Well, I bagged the last one on my list today," remarked the cigar drummer with satisfaction. "So I'm afraid I'll have to be off in the mornin'."*

*"You'll be back in the fall, though," the landlord consoled him.*

*"Oh, certainly. You can't lose Lochinvar Leary while there's a Mansion House in Oxendale."*

*"Too bad you won't be here for the Circus," said Mr. Sinclair.*

*"It is hard luck," the drummer agreed. "I haven't been to a really good circus since I was a boy. I stayed over in Porkonia, Kan., once, just to see one, but at the last minute the performance fell through and ended*

*up in a football game. 'Twas almost as good as a circus at that."*

*His audience scented narrative and settled expectantly back in their chairs with feet and legs comfortably disposed. When they were ready Mr. Leary started off on—*

## The Yarn of Football Fantastic



WING to a careless oversight on the part of the manager of the Porkonia fair grounds, Benson Brothers' Mammoth Circus and Professor Sharpe's Travelin' Wonderland had both been booked for the same day. To make matters worse, the advance agents of both shows struck town on the same train.

"I'm sorry, gentlemen," said the manager when he had explained the way matters stood. "I don't see what we can do about it, though, unless one of you consents to withdraw."

"That would be all right—if the

Wonderland people are willin'," spoke up the Circus man.

"If the Wonderland people are willin'?" exclaimed Professor Sharpe's representative. "I trust you don't for a moment imagine that we'd consent to deprive the people of this educational treat that they've been lookin' forward to for——No, sir! Let the Circus people withdraw."

"Tut, tut!" said the Circus man. "Think of the disappointment of the little ones. Besides, if education is what the people want, give it to 'em at the Circus; give it to 'em on a large scale. A little education is a dangerous thing."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said the fair grounds manager, "if you'll only listen a moment, I believe I have a solution of this problem which will be equally agreeable to (with a low bow to the Circus agent) your highly educational Circus, and, sir (with a low bow to the Wonderland man), to your most instructive Wonderland."

"Why not settle this dispute with a game of football between your respective

greatest shows on earth? Such a contest would draw more than double the crowd that either show could draw alone. And as I have been the cause of this slight misunderstandin', it is only just that I should bear the expense of all advertisin'. Is it a go, gentlemen?"

It was a go. Next day every available fence and barn in the county bore a gaudy four-sheet poster announcin':

*Fair Grounds, June 31*  
*2 p. m.*  
***Football***  
*Championship of the Universe!!*  
*Benson Bros.' Mammoth Circus*  
*vi.*  
*Prof. Sharpe's Travelin' Wonderland.*  
***22***  
*Peerless Performers will Positively Appear*  
*22 - Count Them - 22*  
*Admission Twenty-five Cents*

Well, sir, you never saw such a crowd in all your life as assembled to see that game.

Imagine thousands upon thousands of fat people packed together just as close as you can pack 'em. Then drop thin people into all the chinks where the fat ones don't quite touch—and you've got a pretty good idea of the way the fair grounds looked from the tree where I sat.

There was nothin' remarkable about the first part of the game except the fact that the Wonderlands' guards, the Brothers Jones, said to be the stoutest gentlemen in the world, were forced to play their positions sideways.

You see, if they were to face their opponents, either their corporations would have lapped over so as to put them off side, or else they would have had to stand so far back as to make more men behind the line than the rules allow.

In spite of this slight handicap, however, play was about even, and the first half ended without either side scorin'.

'Twas along about the middle of the second half that the teams began to show what they had up their sleeves.

The first sensation was when the

Human Kangaroo, left half-back for the Circus, hurdled the line with a six-foot leap and tore off fifteen yards before the Wonderlands' Elastic-Skinned full-back brought him to the ground.

He followed this up with a leap for ten yards, but on the third play he found the Wonderlands ready for him. Just as he jumped, they jumped, too, and the Kangaroo was brought to bay for a loss of three yards.

Next time the tables were again turned. Again the Kangaroo made a noble leap. Once more the Wonderlands stooped for their counter leap. But just as they were about to spring, every man of them stopped short with a groan. Their opponents were standing on their toes. The Human Kangaroo lit in the full-back's arms, six yards back of them.

'Twas the Circus's ball on Wonder-land's ten-yard line, third down, two yards to gain.

The Wonderlands' captain asked for time out, and gathered his men about him for a conference. Before returnin' to their

places it was noticed that each man stooped as though to fix his shoes.

When play was resumed the Kangaroo was once more called upon for one of his remarkable leaps.

Again the Wonderlands stooped to spring in front of him, and this time they shot high in the air, flingin' the runner back for a heavy loss.

The Circus's rushers stared at their feet as though dazed. And well they might. They were standin' on a long line of vacant footwear. The Wonderlands, havin' loosened their laces, had literally jumped out of their shoes.

"Our ball, first down," cried the Wonderland captain, clappin' his hands together briskly. "Here, there, you backs. Get up in the line and change places with the Brothers Ayre. Now then, boys, get at 'em, hard and low!"

"Fourteen — six — thirty-eight — Y," sang out the quarter-back.

The two smaller of the Brothers Ayre leaped lightly to the third brother's shoulders, and a moment later stood one upon

the other in their wonderful human Eiffel Tower act.

"Seventeen—X Y Z—eleven," continued the quarter-back.

The Turtle Boy snapped the ball back to the quarter, who in turn passed it up to the topmost Ayre.

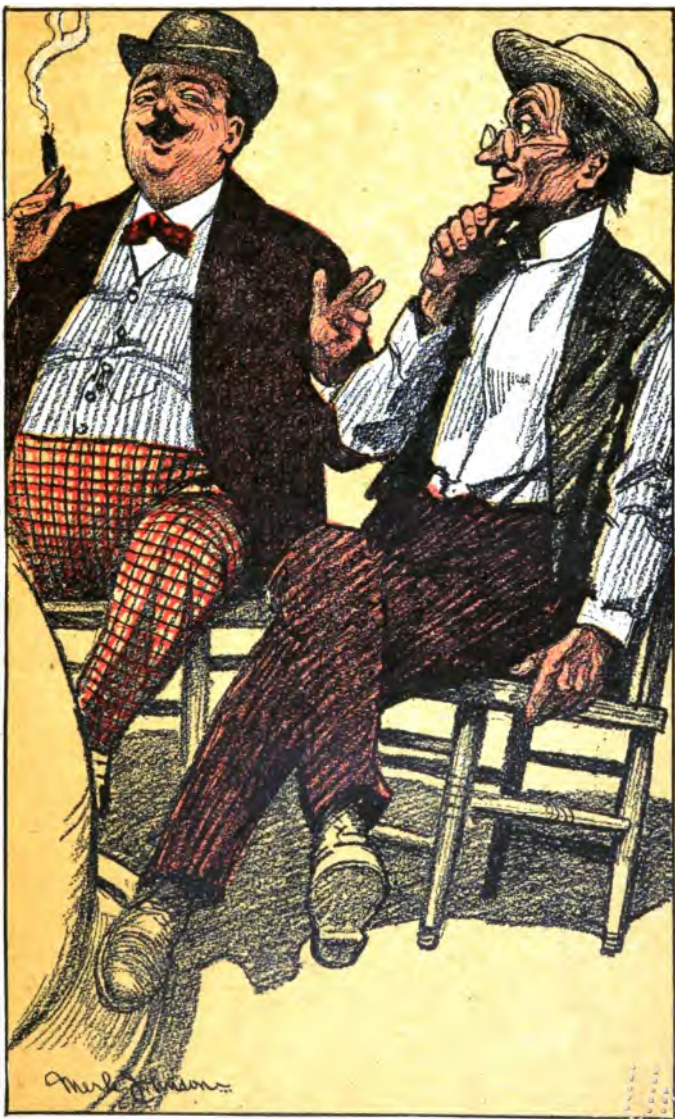
Just as the Circus line was breakin' through, the human tower toppled gracefully forward, thereby gainin' its length, a good five yards.

The human Eiffel Tower act proved invincible for a time. The Brothers Ayre toppled off five yards at a tumble until it was Wonderland's first down on their opponent's 25-yard line.

The Benson Brothers were ragin' up and down the side lines, wavin' their arms like wild men.

Finally, in despair, they ordered the whole Circus team, Human Kangaroo and all, off the field, and substituted their eleven invincible Cossack tumblers.

"If a Cossack pyramid can't stop that fallin' tower," they growled, "nothin' on this earth can."



LOCHINVAR LEARY, the Cigar Drummer, and  
EZRA NORTON, Editor of *The Oxendale Townsman*.



"Sixteen — P D Q — eleven — A," the Wonderland quarter called.

The Brothers Ayre nimbly mounted into their tower formation. At the same time, there was a general scramblin' among the Cossacks, and a moment later the human Eiffel Tower was facin' a grimly determined pyramid of equal height.

"Thirteen — fifty-two," concluded the quarter-back. The two human eminences toppled over against each other with a crash that caused the mass of spectators to seethe with enthusiasm.

"But where's the ball?" people began to ask each other. "The topmost Ayre didn't get it."

No. The quarter-back, foreseein' what would happen, had passed the ball to the Elastic-Skinned Man, and that worthy had cleared the left end just in time to escape the shower of players from the towers above.

The apex of the pyramid espied him first. With a howl of rage he disentangled himself from the groanin' debris and gave pursuit.

He was swift as a deer, and at the 10-yard line made a long, low dive and caught the runner by the calf.

But the Elastic-Skinned Man was under full headway, and stretched a good three yards beyond the spot where the Cossack held his calf. Then, suddenly jumpin' from the ground, he snapped back with a force that knocked his captor senseless. The next instant he was scamperin' over the line for the touchdown that finally won the game for Wonderland.

The 'Travelin' Wonderland's tattooed man can prove all this. He has the score upon his chest.

*"Well, I'll be hanged!" exclaimed Mr. Sinclair, slapping his knee. "Then that's the show the Human Louvre was with before he joined us. I always wondered what that '6—0' just below the Chinese dragon on his chest meant. Don't it beat all how small this world is!"*

*Mr. Leary regarded the Circus man intently for a few moments, and then, with a deep sigh, silently passed him over a cigar.*

*"Football's a durn dangerous game," commented Mr. Abbott authoritatively. "Young Will Cole had his leg broke all on account uv football."*

*"Why," interposed Mr. Norton, with considerable surprise, "I always understood that young Cole's leg was broken in a trolley car accident."*

*"Wal, anyway, he was probably on his way to a football game when it happened," persisted the Sage of Oxendale. "He'd've been all right if he'd stayed t' home."*

*"I never saw football," observed the landlord, who had been gazing thoughtfully at the ceiling, "but I've often thought that it must be a very interesting game. When I played baseball on the famous Lightfoot Lilies, who used to hold the championship of Jones County——"*

*"You don't mean to say that you ever played baseball!" exclaimed the Circus man, surveying the landlord's 360 pounds incredulously.*

*Mr. Little flushed.*

*"Not only did I play, sir, but, if I do say it myself, I had few equals on the diamond*

*before I grew too stout to touch the bag when sliding bases on my stomach.*

*"But as I was about to remark, when I played on the famous Lightfoot Lilies, we had a catcher that I think would have made a mighty good football-player. He was the strongest man I ever laid eyes on. And, unlike the ordinary Circus strong man, he combined his brawn with brains."*

*Continuing, the landlord unwound—*

## The Yarn of the Brawny Batsman



**I** CAN see Bull Thompson as if he were standing behind the plate now. As the batter would face the pitcher, the Bull would straighten up and draw in his breath until he was red in the face.

Then, pop! would go the top button off his shirt, and while the batter was rubbing the back of his neck and wondering what in Jones County had struck him, Dean Bralev, our pitcher, would

shoot the ball over for as pretty a strike as ever split the plate. Some chest expansion had big Bull Thompson.

And bat? Why, say, that man used to hit so everlastingly far, that if the people over the State line hadn't been jealous of our nine, they'd have made our opponents take out extradition papers before they'd let 'em field the ball back.

But the Bull's slugging wasn't as advantageous to the Lilies as you might suppose. He soon acquired such a reputation with teams throughout that part of the country that the instant the batsman preceding him had been disposed of, the outfielders would take it on the run for the furthestmost ruffles on the outskirts of the city. In that way, with a slow pitcher and a good start, they were just as apt as not to get there in time to nab the Bull's hits.

Sometimes the Bull tried to vary his herculean swipes with an occasional well-placed bunt to center-field. Such restraint of muscle, however, was little to his liking, and he sought for other means to baffle

the fielders who used to stand waist deep in the horizon awaiting his long ones.

At last he solved the problem. Instead of driving the ball out over the diamond, he hit upon the plan of swinging his bat down on it and driving it onto the home plate.

When he did this, the ball, under the impetus of his mighty blow, would rebound from the plate to such a height that before it came to earth again he'd have ample time to reach first base and sometimes even second.

There was a stunt for you! They couldn't field him out, because the ball was in the air, and they couldn't hope to catch him out because it had got there on first bounce.

I'll never as long as I live forget the way he foxed the redoubtable Ringtail Roarers with that stunt.

A mean, drizzling rain that had been falling all morning made the diamond soggy and slow when the big game was called, but the thousands that had driven in from every corner of the State put postponement out of the question.

The first time at bat, the Bull let drive for one of his long ones over center. Old Doc Quackenbush, who was umpiring, trained his field-glasses on it and finally diagnosed the runner out, twenty-six seconds after the ball had left his bat.

In the fourth, with Slugger Burrows, the Lily captain, on third, the Bull resorted to his new trick and basted the ball down against the plate with a force that bounced it high enough to enable the Slugger to score.

In the seventh, a similar plate bouncer, only higher, brought in two runs.

The Roarers' outfielders were still playing deep, as there was no telling when the Bull would take it into his head to shift tactics and wallop out one of his long shots.

In fact, it took them so long to get in from their positions after the Bull had been at bat that the game was delayed considerably.

When Bull Thompson came to bat in the last half of the ninth you could have heard a snowflake fall. The score stood

6—3 in favor of the Roarers, the Lilies had the bases full, and two were out.

What would the Bull do? Driving the ball against the plate for a 50-foot bounce was sure to be good for a hit, but that would only bring in two men at the most, which would leave the Roarers still one run to the good, and Jim Timpson, the next man up, was almost a sure out.

On the other hand, the Roarers' fielders were back beyond the town limits waiting expectantly for one of the Bull's long ones. What would the Bull do?

Cy Priest, the Roarers' pitcher, drew his arm back, and a second later the ball was sailing square over the plate.

Down whizzed the Bull's bat on it like a maternal slipper descending upon a wayward son, and—whack!

The Bull was off like a flash for first and the man on third was tearing home.

The Roarers rushed toward the plate to gather in the ball on its descent.

"Where is it? Who sees it?" shouted Cy Priest, peering anxiously skyward.

The runner on third dashed across the plate.

"There it is! There it is!" cried the Roarers' catcher, dancing up and down and pointing excitedly.

"Where? Where? Pshaw! That's only a bird!"

A second fleeting Lily crossed the plate.

"Where in thunder's that ball? Don't any one see it?" roared Priest, shading his eyes with his hands and gazing intently into the heavens.

The third Lily crossed the plate, and the score was tied.

By this time all the men, women and children were on their feet with heads back, scanning the clouds for sign or sight of Thompson's hit.

A moment later a mighty roar shook the stands, and the crowds began pouring out onto the field. Bull Thompson had completed the circuit with the winning run.

"Give us room, give us room," said Cy Priest, motioning the crowd back. "I'm

going to stay here until that ball comes down. I don't believe he hit the darn thing at all."

The Bull merely shrugged his shoulders in an injured sort of way and gave the crowd one of those comical winks of his.

Well, sir, those Ringtail Roarers must have gawked 'round there gazing up in the air for half an hour or more before Cy Priest finally gave the thing up as a bad job and happened to glance down at his feet.

"Simplicity Jefferson!" he exclaimed with a start.

There, not more than half a foot in front of the home plate, was a perfectly round hole about three inches in diameter.

Yes, sir, you've guessed it. Instead of swatting that ball against the hard plate where 'twould have bounded back up in the air, he'd pasted it down onto the soggy earth so hard that he'd driven it over two feet into the ground. We got it out with a pick next morning.

Playing yet? No, the Bull got all bunged up in a runaway eight years ago and had to quit the game. Yanked the horses back with such a jerk that he pulled 'em clean over on top of him. Leg, both arms, three ribs and a collar-bone busted.

Last I heard of him he was down in Chihuahua making wigs for those Mexican hairless dogs.

*"Baseball's certainly a fine game," conceded the Circus man. "It's all on the level. You can't tell who's going to win until the last man's out. There's nothing crooked in it like there is in horse-racing. Why, what show does an outsider like us stand playing the races?"*

*"None at all," declared the editor.*

*"Unless——," the cigar drummer started to suggest.*

*"Unless what?"*

*"Oh, well, there's probably nothin' in it, but several years ago when I was bein' shown through the Porkonia ( Kan. ) Insane Asylum, one of the inmates told me of a system he had*

*for beatin' the races that rather impressed me at the time. I'll give it to you the way he gave it to me, and you can judge for yourselves."*

## The Yarn of the Certain System



IS HIGH, scholarly brow, and deep-set, intelligent eyes at once placed him above the ordinary inmates.

"What's he in here for?"

I inquired of the keeper.

"Ask him. He's harmless."

I did. For a moment he closely scrutinized me. "You seem like a man of education and understandin'," he finally observed without the slightest trace of insanity. "And since the fickleness of fortune renders my great secret useless to me, I know of no reason why I should not share it with you. In fact, if you were to take a billion or two dollars from my enemies it would to some slight extent revenge my wrongs."

His eyes fired with enthusiasm at the thought of it.

"I," he whispered dramatically, "am the author of the only certain system to beat the races that has ever been devised. That," he added with a deep sigh, "is why I am where you see me now. I was betrayed by a supposed friend. The pool-room trust got wind of my wonderful scheme, and, in order to avert the absolute ruin they saw impendin', had me railroaded into this insane asylum.

"What is this wonderful system? Listen:

"For the sake of convenience, let us assume that we are now in New York. As you undoubtedly know, there is a difference in time between New York and Chicago of about one hour. That is to say, when it is six o'clock in New York it is only five o'clock in Chicago.

"In the same way, San Francisco is three times as far west as Chicago, so that there is three hours' difference in time. That is, when it is six o'clock in New York it is only three o'clock in San Francisco. Do you follow me?

"The further west we go the greater the difference in time. If we go eight times as far west as San Francisco we naturally gain eight times three hours, or, roughly speakin', a whole day.

"But where is eight times as far west as San Francisco? Why, sir, it's all the way 'round the world and back to New York again."

He paused, and drew back to watch the effect of his remarkable reasonin'.

"In other words," I ventured to suggest, "if you've been 'round the world in the meantime, today is really yesterday?"

"Precisely. But to put it in a more practical way," he continued in an impressive whisper, "if you send yourself a telegram around the world, westward, you'll get it the day before you write it."

"But what's all that got to do with beatin' the races?" I asked.

"Why, don't you see? Take today's list of winners, for example. If I telegraph it to a friend of mine in Chicago, 'twill reach him an hour ago by Chicago time.

"He'll wire it to a friend in San Francisco. 'Twill reach there three hours ago by 'Frisco time. The 'Frisco man will cable it on to a friend in Honolulu, and so on all the way 'round the globe until it reaches me in New York again just twenty-four hours before I've sent it in the first place.

"The minute I receive the telegram I start out to make the rounds of all the poolrooms, and back each winner for all they'll take on him. After that, it's only a matter of sittin' down and waitin' until it's time to cash in.

"You look incredulous. It seems too easy to be true, you think. You wonder how —— But, ssh! — the keeper is edgin' toward us. I think he already suspects."

With that he switched the subject and began to talk about the cryin' need of a cattle corset that would cause cows to give condensed milk.

*For several moments after the conclusion of Mr. Leary's yarn no one spoke. They were in deep thought. It was the editor*

of The Townsman who finally broke the silence:

"Why, according to your friend's scheme, then——"

"No friend of mine," the drummer cheerily assured him. "That was the only time I ever saw him in my life."

"If this scheme is feasible," persisted the editor, "I don't see what's to confine it to horse-racing. For example, why couldn't a man who had just died have his obituary notice telegraphed 'round the world to him and get it in time to read it before he passed away?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Mr. Norton. Why couldn't he?" The drummer rose and stretched. "Well, gentlemen, I've got to catch an early train in the mornin', and I think I'd better——"

"Don't go yet," urged the Circus man. "I'm going on that 7:10 myself, but I promised to meet my bill-poster here. He ought to be along 'most any minute now. Wait awhile, and we'll all go up and have a night-cap together."

The cigar drummer yawned, and, with an air of resignation, resumed his seat.



## *The Fourth Skein*

*"By the way, I knew there was something I wanted to ask you and Mr. Sinclair before you left," said the landlord as soon as Mr. Leary had comfortably arranged his feet on the stove again. "When I played baseball on the famous Lightfoot Lilies, our nearest rivals for the championship of Jones County, the Redoubtable Ringtail Roarers, either had or didn't have, a man who undoubtedly was—if there ever was such a man—the fastest runner that ever ran, or didn't run, as the case may have been. I was wondering whether either you or Mr. Sinclair, in the course of your extensive travels, had ever run across him? Wyndham Hare, his name was."*

*Each shook his head in negation.*

*"At least, I don't recall the name," the Circus man added. "But tell us about him. I may have met him at that—if there ever was such a man, of course."*

*The landlord waddled over behind the desk and unlocked the safe. After rummaging around a few seconds, he drew out a couple of newspaper clippings, yellow with age.*

*"It's a very remarkable story," he explained when he had resumed his seat, "and I like to have all the facts at hand."*

*With this foreword he unwound—*

## The Yarn of the Fleet-footed Fielder



HE Lightfoot Lilies first heard of Wyndham Hare in this way: Captain Slugger Burrows and the rest of us were sitting 'round the post-office stove one early spring evening when Bull Thompson suddenly let out a whistle that would have stopped work in a stamp mill.

"Listen to this," he said, pointing to

an article in the baseball column of *The Jones County Courier*. I have the article here.

"The Lightfoot Lilies," read the Bull, "will have their hands full defending the county championship this spring. Their ancient rivals, the Ringtail Roarers, have materially strengthened their already formidable aggregation of ball-tossers by the acquisition of a new outfielder, Mr. Wyndham Hare, whom Captain Priest tells us is without doubt the fastest base-runner that ever donned a uniform.

"Captain Priest's attention was first drawn to Mr. Hare under rather remarkable circumstances. While visiting Bloody Gulch, Kansas, he was witness to a street altercation. One of the disputants suddenly pulled a gun and fired. At the same instant the other man turned and fled.

"He was as fleet as the bullet. For five blocks he maintained a slight lead. Then he seemed to weaken a little, and for the next few yards the bullet almost touched his coat.

"Just as he was nearing the end of the

sixth block, however, a mighty shout went up from the spectators who had been attracted by the report of the gun, and they crowded around him to extend their congratulations. The bullet had spent its force and lay harmless on the sidewalk, five yards back of the runner.

"Among the first to grasp the hero's hand was Captain Priest. Learning that in addition to his wonderful running Mr. Hare (for Mr. Hare it was) was something of a ball-player, the shrewd Roarer captain signed him on the spot. We expect great things of you, Wyndham Hare."

"Well, now, what do you think of that!" piped up Sammie Salmon when the Bull had finished reading.

"Huh!" sneered Slugger Burrows. "If you believe everything you hear, you'll get a bee in your ear some of these days and think you're the Franco-Prussian war."

But in spite of this, we knew by the tangled thought ditches on his brow that Slugger was sort of worried himself.

We could hardly wait for the frost to

get out of the ground before we started practise.

For the next five weeks we scanned *The Courier* regularly. There was no further mention of the wonderful Hare, and we began to have hopes that there might be nothing in the report after all.

But on Friday evening of the sixth week, Sammie Salmon burst into the post-office with the latest edition of *The Courier*, and began to read excitedly. I have it here:

"The Ringtail Roarers," read Sammie, "are being greatly hampered in their daily practise for the big match with the Light-foot Lilies by the fleetness of foot of their lately acquired phenomenon, Wyndham Hare. We have it from no less authority than Captain Cy Priest himself, that Hare raises so much dust when he skirts the bases that it is fully fifteen minutes before the diamond settles sufficiently for play to proceed. In spite of the loss of practise thus occasioned, however, the Roarers are confident of pulling up the Lilies by their roots when the proper time comes."

Well, sir, as you can imagine, that little item sort of put a damper on things, and set each man to thinking pretty hard on his way home that night.

The thing that capped the climax, though, was a letter that Slugger got from Cy Priest the week before the game.

"My dear Burrows," Priest wrote, "you have undoubtedly seen mention in the public prints of the incredible speed of our new outfielder, Wyndham Hare. The reports of his raising so much dust that we have to wait fifteen minutes for the diamond to settle before resuming play err only on the side of conservatism. Therefore, knowing that you are the last man to wish our contest next Saturday to terminate prematurely on account of darkness, I appeal to you to have the base-line macadamized and to make arrangements with the town watering-cart to sprinkle the grounds between innings. Should this plan meet with your approval, as I feel sure it will, the Ringtail Roarers will gladly bear half the expense thus incurred.

"Yours for the welfare of the national game,—Cyrus Priest."

"Of course you'll do it," ventured Sammie Salmon.

"Of course I won't," said Slugger. "If this Windy Hare guy raises such dust-clouds that the base-line gets up in the air, why, let him go ahead and do it. Unless the next man up can fly, I'll have him declared out for running out of base-line. Do you think I'm going to have Lily Park all torn up and lose the last week of practise just to please Cy Priest?"

It was with anything but confidence that we trotted on the field the day of the big contest.

"Say, Cap," whispered Salmon, "if he hits the ball at all, I suppose we'd best field right to the plate. There wouldn't be any hope of getting it to third ahead of him, would there?"

"Play the game as you always play it," growled Slugger.

When the Roarers came out for preliminary practise, there was a great craning of necks to see which was the wonderful

Hare. The only new face on the team was the left-fielder.

Slugger Burrows won the toss, and took the field. The stranger went to bat first for the Roarers.

On the second ball pitched he tapped a little grounder to Dean Braley, and although the Dean was a bit rattled like the rest of us, he shot the ball over in plenty of time to catch the runner at first.

"Was he really out?" asked Sammie Salmon in astonishment. "Or was that his second time around?"

"Second time 'round nothing!" shouted Slugger. "Why, that guy couldn't beat a steam-roller going the other way."

He certainly wasn't anything to inspire an express-train with jealousy.

The Lilies began to recover their nerve, and as the game progressed, they gradually forged ahead.

Cy Priest, who was sore in the first place at the failure of his ruse to deprive the Lilies of their practise by getting them to tear up their grounds, grew grouchier and grouchier with every minute of play.

In the ninth, when the Roarers' left-fielder was caught napping off second, leaving the final score 13 to 7 in favor of the Lilies, Priest's face was the picture of pickled disappointment.

"Say, Cy, what was the matter with that famous Hare of yours?" Slugger jeered. "Sort of all tangled up today, wasn't he?"

Priest glared at Slugger.

"I hope you didn't think that stiff was Wyndham Hare, did you?" he asked with a sneer. "Why, Hare's in the hospital. Sprained his back in a game last week. Knocked a home run, and ran 'round the bases so fast that he caught up with himself and collided."

That's only what Cy Priest said, of course. Personally, I don't believe it.

*"Neither do I," grunted Mr. Abbott.*

*"It seems to me," the editor insinuatingly observed, "that I remember reading that story in a newspaper somewheres."*

*"I don't doubt it," said the landlord, not the least bit ruffled.*

*"It all came out in the sporting page of The Jones County Courier at the time."*

*Before the editor could reply, a sad-eyed man with unshorn locks and bushy brows appeared at the door.*

*"Oh, hello Lorraine," the Circus man greeted him. "Come in. I've been waiting for you. What luck!"*

*The sad-eyed one struck an attitude and cleared his throat.*

*"I have posted Oxendale," he announced in sepulchral tones; "I have posted North Oxendale, Oxendale Center, West Oxendale,—yea, and even Oxendale Junction have I posted. Neither barn nor fence hath escaped my hand. Tomorrow, fate willing, I will on to Bullardvale."*

*"Good," said the Circus man. "But wait a second, will you? I'd better get you a copy of my itinerary so you'll know where to find me if anything goes wrong. I've got one in my room."*

*The landlord motioned to the chair the Circus man had just vacated.*

*"Pray be seated, sir."*

*"Bill-poster, eh?" inquired Mr. Abbott.*

"Humph. *Thet's funny. I'd 've picked ye out fur a play-aëtor every time.*"

"For many years I did follow the Profession," explained the newcomer. "But gradually, through force of circumstances, I drifted away from the draymatic art over to the piëtorial so that today, sir, I am, as you have correctly divined, a bill-poster—nothing but a common bill-poster. Ah, gentlemen, as the gentle Bard of Avon so aptly hath it,"—here Mr. Lorraine made a dramatic gesture ceilingward, and huskily demanded:

"O mighty Cæsar! Dost thou lie so low?  
*Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,  
Shrunk to this little measure?*"

"Any one can see that you're still an aëtor at heart," the drummer kindly assured him. "What difference does it make that you're no longer on the stage? To the true artist, 'all the world's a stage.'"

"A truer word ne'er passed the lips of our immortal Will," the ex-Thespian agreed. "Of all the parts I've aëted, those which I've aëted off the boards in the great drayma of every-day life have been the best. You've

*never seen me on the stage? Ah, then you cannot realize the startling nature of my statement."*

## The Yarn of the Thespian Triumphant



WHY, out in Bleeding Heart, Mont., when night after night I thrilled thousands upon thousands with my masterly *Richard III*, my acting was so realistic as to actually endanger the life of one of my fellow players. The realism of my death scene was such as to cause the audience to rise to their feet with cries of vengeance for the luckless *Richmond*.

"Lynch him! Lynch him! Kill the other one, too!" they shouted.

My great "*Romeo and Juliet*" triumph took place in Wisconsin the same year. So lifelike was my death scene that the audience could not be persuaded that I still lived. In spite of the manager's protest, they demanded that the curtain be

ring down as a matter of respect. The local paper next morning, still under the impression that my death was genuine, paid me a touching tribute. Under the heading "A Dead One," it spoke of me as "an awful loss as *Romeo*."

But, as I remarked in the first place, my most finished bits of art have been those enacted on the stage of every-day life.

For example, there was the time I laid the ghosts in Broken Skull, Kansas. A man had bought a farmhouse. He was a stranger to the country and thought he'd struck a bargain.

But he soon found out that the place was dear at any price. Men would not work on it, the crops would not grow, the cattle sickened and died. Strange sounds at night, such as the clanking of chains and the breaking of glass, made the place unbearable. In short, the house was haunted.

The man was about to give the place up in despair when luckily he heard of me. You'll scarcely believe what I tell

you unless you've seen me act, but after I'd given two performances as *Hamlet's Ghost*, every other shade on the premises, green with envy, melted away and has never been seen since. Today there isn't a more fertile farm for miles around.

But my crowning achievement was the time I saved the Deadwood coach. You've never heard of it? Alas, such is earthly fame!

We had just reached a lonely place in the road when a troop of masked horsemen dashed out of the impenetrable forest that lined either side of the pass.

"Halt!" their leader cried in stentorian tones.

As we were all unarmed, there was nothing else to do.

"Dismount! Up with your hands!" commanded Jesse James, for it was none other than the intrepid James himself.

Again we obeyed.

'Twas at this point that my mastery of the draymatic art saved the day.

Quickly changing from the attitude of abject terror which I had purposely



MR. LORRAINE, the Bill Poster and ex Play-actor, and  
MR. D'ARCY SINCLAIR, of Ring Brothers' Stupendous Circus.

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assumed on first alighting from the coach, I took upon an expressson of unspeakable relief and joy.

"They come!" I cried, pointing down the road with one hand, and snapping the fingers of the other in a life-like imitation of galloping horses. "They come! We are saved!"

The robbers, completely taken in by my ruse, turned to look. As they did so, I threw stones down the road, still snapping my fingers like clattering hoofs. Great dust-clouds arose where the stones struck. The robbers, thoroughly terrified at the approach of the rescuing party, as they supposed, threw themselves into their saddles and galloped off as fast as spur-driven horses could carry them.

*"Oh, beg pardon, sir, I didn't hear you come in, sir," stammered the bill-poster in confusion, as he turned and saw the Circus man quietly regarding him with an amused smile.*

*"That's all right. I've been enjoying your reminiscences immensely. Here's my*

*itinerary up till Saturday." The Circus man handed him a list.*

*"Yes, sir. Yes, sir. I bid you a pleasant evening, gentlemen." And the Thespian bill-poster made a hurried exit.*

*"D'ye s'pose thet all he wus tellin' us really happened?" asked Mr. Abbott when he had gone. "Or is it jest somethin' he's heard when he wus talkin' to himself?"*

*"Oh, he's not so bad," spoke up the Circus man. "Lorraine's honest, and that's more than you can say about a good many men. He's had some pretty tough rows to hoe in his time, but in spite of all the bumps and knocks, he's stayed as straight as the day is long."*

*"And why would n't he stay straight?" demanded the sage. "It's a matter of policy, honesty is. He don't deserve any credit fur thet. It pays t' be good. Virtue beats vice in every race, an', in addition t' bein' its own reward, it usually pulls in a few of the outside bets of life along with it.*

*"I know of a case thet happened right here in Oxendale. I won't mention the young feller's name, 'cause ye'd know him in a*

*minute if I did, an' his folks are hard-workin', respectable people. We'll call him Jake, jest because thet war n't his name, nor anything like it."*

## The Yarn of the Sinner Stung



**J**AKE was a bad man clean through. He drank an' he cussed, an' the Lor' knows what he didn't do. He'd steal th' dinner-bag off 'n a blind horse if he thought there wus oats in it.

As fur me, on the other hand, I've always lived a good Christian life an' never done no crittur harm, as any one who ever knew me'll tell ye. I knew Jake's old man, an' felt sorry to see th' boy goin' wrong. Why, I've talked t' him with tears in my eyes as big as horse-chestnuts, tryin' t' get him t' change his ways an' walk th' path of righteousness. Little good it did, though, as you'll see.

'Twus on as likely a spring Sunday as

ye ever saw thet Jake met his end. We wus walkin' through th' woods leadin' t' Morton's Drop. Everything wus peaceable. Th' bees wus buzzin' 'round th' wild flowers along th' path an' th' little birds wus a-titterin' in th' trees, all so joyful-like, thet it seemed it oughter soften any man's heart.

I pleaded with Jake durin' thet walk as I'd never pleaded before. By th' time I'd finished talkin' we'd reached th' end of th' path an' stood on th' edge of th' precipice, a-lookin' down on the calm lake thet lies below.

Suddenly Jake wheeled around facin' me. A strange look came into his eyes an' I drew back skeered-like.

"Gol durn you, Ebenezer Abbott," he growled. "What th' 'ell right have you t' be talkin' t' me th' way y' have, y' old varmint, ye? I've half a mind t' heave ye off inter ——"

With thet he sprung at me like a wild-cat.

"Help!" I hollered, but he grabbed hold of my throat and shut me off.

There we fought like two hyenas, he a-tryin' t' throw me off, an' me a-tryin' not t' let him.

Back an' forth we swayed. But he wus younger 'n I wus, and finally his strength began t' tell. He gave one final push an' over I went. But I made a desprit clutch at his coat, an' he came, too.

Down, down, down!

Poor Jake met a just but awful death in th' placid lake below.

*"But how did you get out of it?" asked the drummer. "You went down with him."*

*"Me? Oh, jest as we struck th' water I woke up and found 'twus nothin' but a dream with me. But poor Jake, he never woke up. All of which goes t' show th' truth of what I said about——" the rest was lost in a wide yawn.*

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